2: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1956
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593 extended to his brothers' sons, especially if their father was dead. Following the same pattern, a man's sons who were away at work sent back money to their father who bought cattle with it, or spent it as the sons asked. It was clear in the 1930's that Ngoni men rarely sent money directly to their wives, though they frequently asked their father to give money to their wives and to buy for them cloth or needed household equipment.

562 844 593 Within the larger orbit of the male family responsibilities women had their more restricted but clearly defined sphere. At a woman's confinement she was looked after by her husband's own mother, aided by his other mothers and by his sisters if they were present in the village. At the 'coming out' of the new member of the family, ten to fourteen days after birth, the woman and the baby, bathed and ritually cleansed, were seated on a mat outside the hut and presented to the male members of the father's family who gave small gifts to the baby. If it was a boy, the father's mother generally carried it to the gate of the kraal where the men were sitting, to present it to them as one who would eventually herd the cattle. On this occasion, or soon after, the [553] child's name was chosen, usually by the father's father, who prepared and gave to the mother a calf-skin or goat-skin for carrying the child in. The meat of the animal was cooked by the father's mother and a small feast was held for the father's mothers, sisters, brothers and their wives, and any others of the father's family who had helped in the confinement.[1] After the child had thus been acknowledged in its father's family circle, the mother took the baby to visit her own family, who also gave it presents.

593 862 During the rearing of the child, its father's female relatives assumed responsibility for giving the young mother advice. The father's mother was expected to note the stage at which the child should be weaned, always if possible before the mother's next pregnancy. If the father's mother was unobservant, the other senior women of the husband's family would rebuke her and say 'Look now you are foolish because the child has been endangered. You are like an enemy to it.' These women then took the initiative and insisted on weaning the child. They said to the baby's mother 'We want to wean the child.' They made a paste of ground chillies and put it on the mother's breasts and covered them with a skin or cloth. The child was taken from her after it had tried to [853] suck and had been refused, and given to the father's mother or sister, who looked after it with the help of a nursemaid. It was fed on cow's milk, *amasi* (milk curds), and gruel.

[78] The publicity given to the weaning and the initiative taken by the senior women of the husband's family were intended to inform others in the village that the parents were now free to have another child. This was one aspect of the old Ngoni form of family planning and, in describing

[1] This feast was also held when a carrying cloth was given instead of a skin.

2: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1956
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what took place, informants were anxious to point this out. They also admitted that its successful carrying out depended on several factors which no longer operated. The former Ngoni households with a number of servants and nursemaids were only to be found in the families of the Paramount and subordinate chiefs. The rigid separation of the girl from her own family at marriage was no longer usual in the central kingdom where Ngoni marriages often took place in the same village, and where daughters of important men stayed in their fathers' villages at marriage instead of leaving.

In Ngoni households family sleeping and eating arrangements depended not upon the small individual family but on the extended family group and on the boys' dormitory (*lawesi*). As a general rule small children slept with their mother in her hut, but when her husband was sleeping with her it was considered wrong to have any but very young children in the hut. Boys up to the age of seven, when they went to the *lawesi*, and girls up to their marriage, usually slept in the hut of a mother or a widowed sister of their father.

Each wife, after she had been 'shown the hearth-stones', had a granary built for her by her husband or her husband's brothers where she stored grain. On the rafters in her hut, and in pots and jars on the enclosed verandah, and in pits dug under the eaves, she stored other foodstuffs, such as chillies, beans and sweet potatoes. From these supplies, supplemented by fresh 'relish' from the gardens or bush, she cooked daily meals which she served to her husband, and which her younger sons in the *lawesi* fetched to eat there, while she ate with her young children. Her husband's meals and the older boys' meals were taken in company with the male members of his kinship group and other villagers at the men's meeting-place by the gate of the kraal. His wife sent his food by a child in a covered basket with the small pot of relish on top. The publicity of the men's eating habits made them critical among their fellows of their wives' cooking, and this was a strong incentive among Ngoni wives to maintain a high standard of cooking. In addition to sending food to her husband, an Ngoni wife was expected to send a basket of food now and then to her father-in-law, or to any of her brothers-in-law who had assisted her to mend a roof or build a granary.

Within a wife's hut, not only food but other possessions, both personal and household, were stored. Clothes for daily and ceremonial use; mats for sleeping on and for drying grain; pots for water, cooking, and beer-brewing; ornamental jars for storing beans; baskets for carrying grain; food baskets embroidered with beads—the Ngoni wife of good family expected to possess all these and to keep them carefully. Many of them she brought with her on her marriage or had given her later as presents by her own parents and family, in order that she might not appear poor or of low rank among her husband's people. For the same reason, she

3: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1960
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not enough milk, or was unable to suckle the child, or was ill or died. If a woman died in or just after childbirth, and the child survived, it might be suckled by the paternal grandmother or by another co-wife of the dead woman, but as a rule they resorted to artificial feeding, and often used it to supplement breast feeding. The father of the child took the food pipe of a beast recently killed, washed it and dried it, and handed it over to the women to rub with fat until it was soft and pliable. One end was then tied tightly to close it, it was filled with warm cow's milk, and the other end was tied loosely so that the child could just suck through it. It was kept well washed with warm water, and many infants were brought up successfully with this 'bottle'.

The babies were also given very thin gruel made of millet or maize flour, and curds and whey beaten up together. This was put in a very small gourd, decorated with drawings, with a spout to pour from, and a cover to keep flies and dust out.

Weaning

Studies of weaning in different cultures lay emphasis on the traumatic shock of separation from the mother, not only in terms of being refused the breast, but also of being removed to sleep elsewhere than beside the mother, and perhaps being sent away to stay with another relative.

In the Ngoni pattern of nurse-girl care and of supplementary feeding, especially after the first few months, it might seem that the actual weaning was less of a shock than in cultural situations where the baby was with the mother all day, carried about by her and never refused the breast if it cried. Ngoni women, however, and men too, all asserted that weaning was a shock to the child, even if it happened at two years old.

The reasons for this shock were partly that it was done all in one morning at one fell swoop, and partly that the child was sent away from the mother at night. The same nurse girl looked after it all day, but now took it more often to

3: Read E-5 (1935-1939)1960
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862 other compounds, so that the child should not 'see the mother's breasts and cry for them'. Nevertheless they did cry, some of them day and night at first, and many for weeks at night when the indulgent warmth of the mother on her mat was exchanged for the kindly but somewhat stern care [603] of the grandmother or another older woman. Paternal grandmothers did not believe in spoiling Ngoni children, and the child was often left to cry itself to sleep.

593 862 606 The Ngoni used to say: 'On the day when a child was weaned, all the village knew. It was not a secret. People spoke about it to show that the parents were now free to have another child.' The mother-in-law and the other senior women of the father's family took the initiative as well as assuming responsibility for deciding the moment for weaning. Those same senior women who had assisted at the birth of the child arrived one morning on the veranda of the mother's hut and announced, 'We want to wean this child.' Apparently the mother was sometimes capable of refusing to co-operate. She did not want to give up suckling the child, so she picked it up and ran out of the hut past the women, and hid herself and her child with some of her friends. The senior women did not stoop to argument. They formed into a procession and filed out of the compound saying, 'Well, she has refused. She can now find the proper time herself, with her husband.' The young mother, who had yielded to a sudden impulse, found herself on reflection in great difficulty. It was considered a 'shame' for her to do the weaning herself, and her husband was jeered at by his brothers and friends for having a rebellious wife who did not pay attention to the claims of his family on the child.

862 So when the senior women announced that they had come to do the weaning, most young mothers meekly submitted, whatever their personal sentiments were. The senior women pounded chillies and put the hot paste on the mother's breasts, and held the child near enough to smell the chillies, even to touch them. They said to the child, 'Leave it alone.

3: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1960
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This breast is now bad'—and they spat downwards as they did when something was really bad. While the child was howling with fright and frustration, the mother's breasts were covered with a cloth. The child was then picked up and carried away in its carrying cloth to the compound of its paternal grandmother, or a widowed paternal aunt, attended by its own nurse girl. If it had a feeding bottle, or one could be made for it, it was given cow's milk, as well as gruel, and curds and whey. The Ngoni women believed that if a weaned child was given cow's milk it would forget its mother's breasts quickly, but they admitted that it was a conventional belief and not always justified.

Social relationships involved in the birth of a child: Wife to husband's family

Throughout the period of pregnancy, during childbirth and after, up to and including weaning, the mother of a new baby was made to feel her position as a stranger among her husband's relatives. Before marriage it had been impressed on her by her own family that, at any rate in the early years of marriage, she must be obedient and humble, not only to establish her own present and future position among her husband's people, but for the sake of the reputation of her own family from whom she was now separated. The key relationship in this cycle of pregnancy, birth, weaning and new conception was that between her and her mother-in-law. If she showed respect by being humble and obedient, she could establish a behaviour pattern which in the end rewarded her by giving her self-respect because she was doing her duty in accepting the authority of her husband's mother. It was no easy path for a high-spirited girl who had had freedom and indulgence in her own home. She knew however that these first few years of marriage and child-bearing were the critical ones. She could see for herself how women who had been married longer had more freedom from the authority of their mothers-in-law because they had learned how to

3: Read E-[illegible] (1935-1939)1960
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858 867 signs of irritation at female control, especially with this prohibition on going to the kraal gate. They escaped surveillance and ran off there now and then, only to be caught by one of the men, beaten and brought back to the compound with the remark: 'This child is not yet a herd boy. Keep him with you.'

If the village was near a roadway with traffic on it, or near a river, children were forbidden to go there without some older person with them. They were also warned not to go near fireplaces in case a burning log fell out, and to keep away from the woodpile where there might be snakes.

Training in habits

855 In these surroundings, diversified, orderly, and on the whole safe if forbidden places were avoided, young children's needs were attended to and they were gradually trained to look after themselves. For food, health and sleep, their primary physical needs, they had their older sisters, nurse girls, mothers, grandmothers and helpers all at hand to ensure that these needs were satisfied.

264 962 After the post-weaning months were over, and generally though not always after the next baby was born, a young child went back to eat with his mother in her compound and sleep in her hut, though a grandmother, if she had taken a special fancy to a child, might say she was going to keep him to eat and sleep with her. In his mother's compound twice a day the child watched her and her helpers preparing and cooking a meal. In due time he was called to the veranda where the food lay smoking, his hands were wiped, he was made to rinse out his mouth, and he sat down beside his mother or his nurse in a circle round the food basket. This contained the mash of cooked grain, usually maize, and beside it were the little pots of cooked 'relish', beans, peas, [262] green vegetables, tomatoes, ground-nuts. At first someone pinched up a little lump of the mash, dipped it in a relish, and popped it into his mouth, telling him to shut his mouth and chew before he swallowed. Later he learned to do this

3: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1960
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himself, with his eyes rather anxiously on the elders, lest he should take too large a lump, or get the relish all over his hand and wrist instead of only on his finger-tips. He learned, however hungry he was, not to stuff himself, and not to eat noisily. If he smacked his lips and gulped audibly, someone in the circle might say: 'I hear the guns of the Tyandla people booming.' They all stopped eating and looked at him, and he learned that a proverb could be a veiled rebuke, and he hung his head, ashamed.

Sometimes the smaller children had cow's milk or curds and whey or thin gruel given to them in a tiny gourd between the main meal-times, and through the day nurse girls and older sisters gave them little snacks if they thought of it or if the child whimpered because it was hungry. A favourite snack was ground bulrush millet, creamy and nutty to taste. Throughout this period spent in the women's world the child did not lack food either at or between meals. As he grew more mobile and independent, he went foraging in the compounds of his other mothers and his grandmothers, especially if his own mother had gone to her garden. They always welcomed him and gave him something to go on with.

After set meals the child was made to rinse his mouth, and his hands were cleaned by his nurse girl and his face and chest washed if he had covered himself with food fragments. His nurse girl found him a 'tooth-brush twig' and frayed it for him, and taught him to use it after meals as well as in the early morning.

Washing of small children was always done in the compound. While some children squirmed and yelled when washed, others liked it. They sat grinning on the veranda while their mother or nurse splashed water over them, rubbed soapy leaves on their hair, dried them with a cloth, and rubbed cow's fat on their skin. The Ngoni children in well-ordered households shone with cleanliness till they were about six years old. Then the boys dodged these female attentions, their skin became dry and scruffy, and their hair full

4: Barnes E-5 (1946-1949)1951 FR5 Ngoni FR5
Mpezeni

turn to a younger brother for help in arranging a marriage, but although it is said that a man cannot marry the widow of a younger brother, this is sometimes done. The position of children born in a union of this kind is anomalous and there is likely to be dissension in the family if the elder brother has no children by his own wives.

10. Rights in wives and children

The new-born child sleeps in its mother's hut, is in danger from its father's adultery, and is held by its parents at their ritual resumption of sexual intercourse. It is carried to the garden on its mother's back and at mealtimes sucks porridge from her finger. Perhaps its father may play a little with it, but this is not very likely. After weaning, which takes place about the age of two, it may be sent to a grandparent or some other relative, or may perhaps remain in the parental hut for a few more years. But already it has been handled and probably suckled by many women, has learnt to play with the other young children in the village, and has gone off with them into the bush or to the stream. It has learnt also the correct kinship terms for most people in the village and has seen its village teams dance against those of other villages. It has gone visiting in other villages with its parents and has begun to explore its web of kinship, of which it is the centre.

The growing child therefore does not see its parents as sharply distinguished from all other adults in the vicinity, but merely as the two people to whom its ties are closest and on whom it is most dependent. If a child whose parents are dead or are living in Southern Rhodesia is brought up by a relative, it may not learn their names until it is adult, if then. Parents are important to their children only when they live near them or with them. It is when children grow up in the village of their parents that they rely on them for school fees, clothes and medicines. Later a boy may ask his father for financial help or may use him as a banker, handing over his wages to him.

This is true not only of a man's own children of whom he is both genitor and pater, but also of his wife's adulterine and pre-marital children, if he chooses to accept them into his household. It is clear that if a man has paid bridewealth, he has custody of all the children borne by his wife, in adultery as well as in wedlock. If he has not paid bridewealth, then adulterine children like legitimate children belong in theory to his wife's relatives. In practice a man can either accept or spurn them. If he has been away a long time and returns to find his wife with illegitimate children, he may decide to accept the children as his own. They then take his descent name and not that of their genitor. The biological parentage of such children is not mentioned openly, but is remembered in malicious gossip.

Case history 11

Laban went away to work in Southern Rhodesia. His wife Sara went